United Nations A/ES-10/431–S/2009/3

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
5 January 2009

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Identical letters dated 2 January 2009 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am compelled to write to you once again, as Israel, the occupying Power, presses on with the deadly and destructive military campaign it launched six days ago against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip. Despite the international outcry and condemnation and despite the vast human suffering and humanitarian catastrophe deliberately and wilfully being caused, Israel continues its lethal military assaults against the defenceless civilian population in Gaza, killing and injuring many more civilians. Even as I write this letter, indiscriminate Israeli air strikes are targeting densely populated neighbourhoods and refugee camps. Today alone, six children have been killed, bringing the total number of casualties thus far to 428 persons killed, and over 2,200 persons injured.

Yesterday, Israel perpetrated yet another extrajudicial killing, as its fighter jets struck the four-story house of Nizar Rayyan, completely destroying the home, which is situated in the middle of the Jabaliya refugee camp, and murdering him as well as 13 members of his family, including his nine children. This brutal political assassination, committed by the occupying Power in flagrant violation of international law, also endangered the lives of scores of children, women and other civilians in what is clearly a civilian area.

In this regard, over the past six days, Israel, the occupying Power, has repeatedly and deliberately targeted civilian areas and objects in the Gaza Strip, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. In addition to direct attacks on homes, this has included strikes against civil defence installations, destroying vitally needed firefighting vehicles and other equipment needed to cope with the massive destruction Israel's non-stop bombardment of the area is causing.

At the same time, the occupying Power has persisted in its obstruction of the entry of vitally needed humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, exacerbating the rapidly declining humanitarian situation. International aid organizations, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

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(UNRWA), have issued repeated appeals to allow for the entry of humanitarian assistance that is desperately needed by the population. In this regard, we wish to underscore that reports indicate that the warehouses of both UNRWA and the World Food Programme (WFP) in the Gaza Strip are now virtually empty and the absence of such food supplies threatens the dependent civilian population in Gaza with starvation.

The international community must be clear in its condemnation of such criminal behaviour against the Palestinian civilian population under Israel's occupation and must demand that the occupying Power abide by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant provisions of international law. In this regard, we reiterate our urgent appeal to the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, to act to bring an immediate end to the grave breaches of international humanitarian law being committed by Israel, which are only wreaking carnage and destruction among our people.

We also call once again for all efforts to be exerted to compel Israel to lift its inhumane siege of Gaza and to allow for urgently needed humanitarian assistance and other basic supplies to reach the civilian population. Moreover, we reiterate our call for the provision of international protection for the defenceless Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip. We believe that such steps are necessary to ensure that the bloodletting ends, to ensure the well-being and safety of the civilian population and to promote calm in the area and avert the further deterioration and inflammation of the situation.

The international community has consistently and repeatedly rejected Israel's illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and called on it to comply with its obligations as occupying Power in respect of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The international community must remain firm in its demands and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention in particular have the obligation to ensure respect for the Convention and to hold Israel responsible for its grave breaches. Further in this regard, the United Nations, including the Security Council, must uphold its Charter responsibilities to address this crisis and to help the Palestinian people, who are suffering the wrath of an oppressive, brutal military occupation, subjected to unprecedented collective punishment, military assaults and innumerable violations of their human rights by Israel, the occupying Power.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 326 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 30 December 2008 (A/ES-10/430-S/2008/835), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice (as all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in an annex to a future letter).

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations